Trumai SP23
Bacairi SP7
Yaruma SP25
Waura SP18
Mato Grosso SP1

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/For a sketch map of the state of Mato Grosso showing the location of various ethnic groups, see 3:Petrullo, SP8 Bororo, category 116, map facing p. 180./

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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CHAPTER ONE

The Upper Xingú Area

Previous Field Surveys

114 Buell Quain's research among the Trumaí Indians of the upper Xingú River in Brazil was accomplished during the months of August to November of 1938. There have been expeditions since then, and several preceded it. The best known of the early ethnographers is Karl von den Steinen, who was the first white man to explore the tributaries of the Xingú and to contact and report upon the tribes there. His trips of 1884 and 1887 were followed by those of Hermann Meyer in 1897 and 1899, Max Schmidt in 1901, and Vincent Petrullo in 1931. Since Quain's trip, Oberg in 1948, Galvão in 1947 and 1950, de Lima in 1947 and 1948, and Robert Carneiro and Gertrude E. Dole in 1953–54 have worked among the "tribes" of the upper Xingú.* Most of the earlier research was in the form of surveys, which did not concentrate on the culture of any one group. Intensive studies can only be done through continuous residence among and careful observation of a tribe. Quain did exactly this for several months, filling a gap of much-needed information from the upper Xingú. He has also treated social, political, and religious structure much more thoroughly than the surveys, which have given especial attention to material culture. Since the other sources have treated this aspect of culture more completely than did Quain, and as Quain himself was more interested in non-material culture, the present work will follow his emphasis.

Geographical Features

131 The tributaries of the Xingú River have particularly attracted ethnologists, because the inaccessibility of the region has made it a fortress against the inroads of Brazilian civilization. There were probably few places in Brazil harder to reach. Entry from the north is virtually impossible as the main stream of the Xingú is blocked by falls, and transportation by river boat is therefore precluded. Travel above the fall

* The term "tribe" is commonly accepted by anthropologists to mean a multi-community group unified within a common social structure or by continuous political controls, the people of which share the same language and culture and feel themselves to be one. This is not true of the upper Xingú groups, and the term is used herein for purposes of convenience and in its broadest sense only.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

line by canoe would involve a journey of several hundred miles through mostly uninhabited country. The southern approach is the only feasible one for surface transportation. Even this is difficult as canoes and pack animals are needed after leaving Cuyabá. Between that city and the upper Xingú, the Planalto de Matto Grosso intervenes. This is an extremely rugged upland, hard to traverse. The isolation of the area made difficulties for ethnologists, but these were more than compensated for by the intactness of the native cultures. The establishment in 1947 of an outpost and airstrip of the Fundação Brasil Central, located below the juncture of the Kuluene and Kuliseu rivers, has done much to overcome the physical obstacles. The near future should see a considerable increase in ethnographic data from the headwaters of the Xingú.

In 1938 the Trumaí village was situated on the Kuluene River near its juncture with the Kuliseu. The Kuluene is the easternmost of the six parallel rivers that form the headwaters of the Xingú. The Xingú, itself, is one of the largest of the rivers tributary to the Amazon. It joins the Amazon about two hundred miles from the mouth of that river, after flowing from south to north for approximately one thousand miles. The six rivers which flow parallel to each other for over two hundred miles and then join to form the Xingú are, from east to west, the Kuluene, Kuliseu, Batoví, Jatobá, Ronuro, and Steinen rivers. They rise in the uplands, flowing through plains country and gallery forest. Further downstream they widen out and begin their descent into the tropical rain forest. The open country between the streams diminishes and the area covered by forest increases. The terrain is flat with but slight elevations between the rivers. Opening on the rivers are marshy subsidiary streams and large systems of lagoons which extend for several miles. Adjacent to the Kuluene and Kuliseu are broad sections of periodically inundated savannah lands, which are little used by the Indian population.

The heavy rains from October to April have the same profound effect upon the annual cycle of life here as they do in other sections of the Brazilian rain forest. Of great importance, also, is the effect of the rains upon the soil. The rains are too heavy to allow the surface soil to retain them. The water runs off or sinks deeply into the loose earth, leaching the surface of minerals and making it poor for agriculture. Since no form of mineral replenishment is used, a garden plot becomes exhausted in about two or three years, or after two plantings.

Nevertheless, the rain forest is suitable for primitive agriculture, since the looseness of the soil makes it ideally adapted to the primitive tools in use. As the open grasslands in this section of South America have extremely poor soil and cannot be tilled with simple hand tools, the Trumaí, like other tropical forest peoples, are forced to make their gardens in forest clearings in locations that are not flooded annually.

[text continues on p. 7]

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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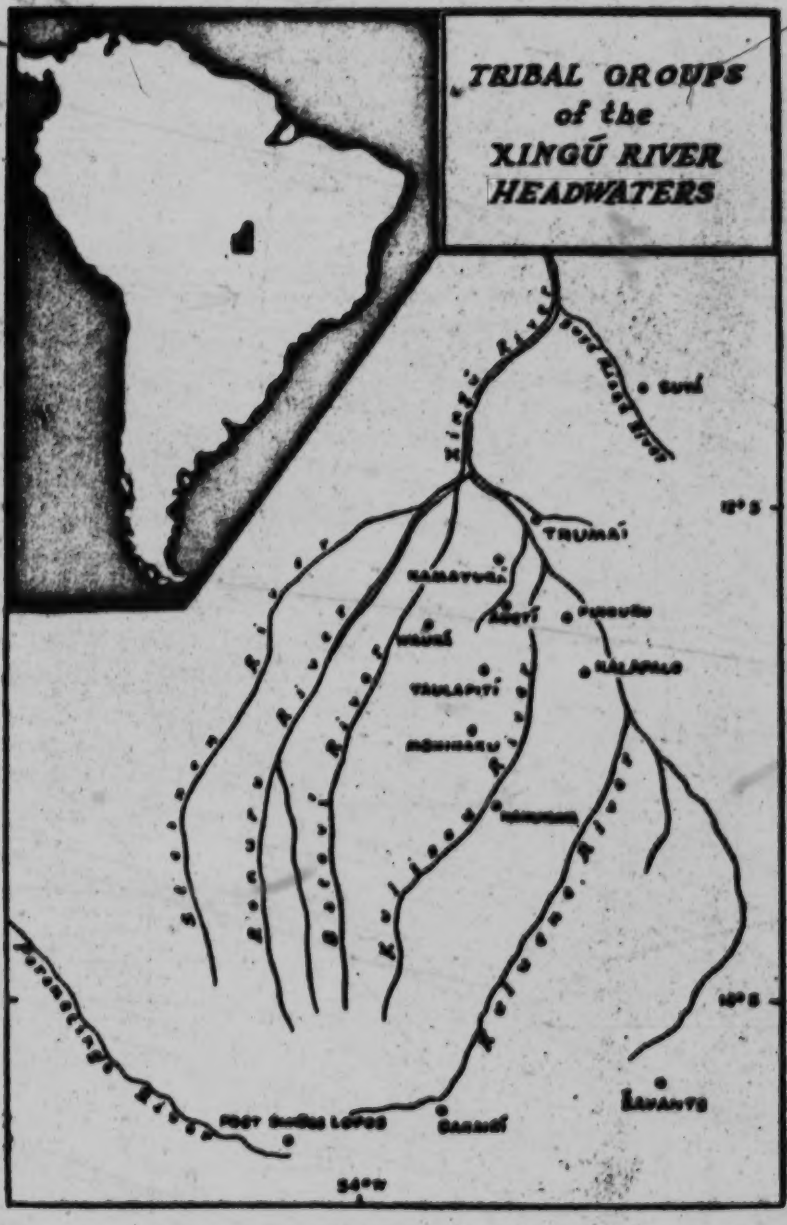

/127 cont./

B T 103 133 T [361] luggage. They reached the place where the Kulisehu empties /128/ into the beautiful wide Kuluëne in seven hours, passed a tributary on the left, a canal of the Mariapé-Nahuquá on the right, found on the right bank the Trumaí villages in the condition described on page 114, and from here were able in all of four hours -- in eight hours from the emptying of the Kulisehu -- to reach Schingú-Koblenz at the junction of the Kuluëne and Ronuro, that large sandy beach where our meeting with the Trumaí was enacted in 1884.

At that time the Trumaí had thus come down on their Kuluëne, and this large river, of which we knew only the mouth, was designated for us as the "Kulisehu." A strange development! On our new expedition we had sought the "Kulisehu" and had found and traveled the Kulisehu as well, but we had meant the Kuluëne. Even the Trumaí live below the Kulisehu mouth; farther up on the Kuluëne lived the Nahuquá tribes, which fortunately, however, were also settled on the Kulisehu in the village visited by us.

Vogel and Perrot had bad weather. On account of the cloud cover, the astronomical latitude could not be determined either at the mouth of the Kulisehu or in Koblenz. The Kuluëne was 241 meters wide below the Kulisehu mouth, 289 meters somewhat above it. From Koblenz they had gone up the Ronuro, had passed the Batovy mouth in a scant half hour -- where on 30 August 1884 we had emerged from the endlessly winding forest stream and for the first time were able to enjoy with some certainty the hope that we had actually found the Schingú -- and had finally continued the journey on the Ronuro for two kilometers farther upstream. The Ronuro had an average width of 250 meters and a depth of three to six meters; the Kuluëne, above Koblenz, measured only 187 meters and the main river at our sandy beach, 366 meters.

B 122 If we did not wish to jeopardize all of our success, the thought of traveling up the Kuluëne and visiting the other Nahuquá villages was completely out of the question. The rainy period had set in in earnest, the journey upstream was becoming